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CAPTIONS: SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JANUARY 17-20, 2009

Summary: Reports of Pakistan FM Qureshi and Interior Advisor Malik's joint briefing to foreign diplomats "seeking world support to persuade India for the resumption of Indo-Pak peace process stalled in the aftermath of Mumbai attacks," dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. "Historic inauguration of the first U.S. black-American President Barack Obama will be celebrated today (Tuesday)" was also page one fare in all newspapers. Two Urdu newspapers "Ausaf" and "Jinnah" also published a special edition on President-elect Obama's inauguration. In addition, several major dailies reported "U.S. CENTCOM General Petraeus would arrive in Islamabad today (Tuesday) on a two-day visit."

Most major dailies ran editorials on the "historic" inauguration of the U.S. President-elect Obama, and the world's "hopes and expectations" from him as President of the U.S. The English daily, "Dawn," noted that "a black man, who at the time of his birth was a distinctly second-class American, will ascend the most powerful office in the world that will make today's events such compelling viewing." The center-right English daily, "The Nation," observed that the President's agenda must include "measures to cope with global warming and help make the world a more peaceful place by cutting down defense spending on unrealistic military schemes." Toeing the line, the Urdu daily, "Express," noted that the world expects "President Obama will review President Bush's war-mongering policies and will help bring peace to the world." End Summary.

News Stories

"Pakistan Seeks World Support" "The Nation" (01/20)

"Pakistan has urged the international community to persuade India for the resumption of Indo-Pak peace process stalled in the aftermath of Mumbai attacks. A briefing for the Ambassadors of different countries including United States, European nations as well as Asian and African states based in Islamabad was held in the Foreign Office on Monday. The briefing arranged to inform the Ambassadors about measures taken by Pakistan to investigate the Mumbai attacks was co-chaired by Foreign Minister Mahmood Qureshi and Advisor to the Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik."

"Adventurism To Get Firm Reply" "Dawn" (01/20)

"Pakistan has cautioned the world that it will befittingly retaliate against any Indian military adventurism. According to sources, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said at a briefing for Foreign Ambassadors on Monday that Pakistan would act in 'self-defence' if there was any action by the Indian side.... Prime Minister's Adviser on Interior Affairs Rehman Malik informed the envoys about the 'concrete steps' taken by the authorities, including detention of suspects, launching a formal inquiry and constituting an FIA team

comprising experts of the Special Investigation Group."

"Investigation Will Be Transparent, India Assured" "Dawn" (01/20)

"Pakistan on Monday reassured India that it would conduct a transparent investigation on 'information' about the Mumbai attack and said that defeating terrorists was its top priority. Renewing the government's determination to make use of all resources for national defence, it urged NATO forces to stop drone attacks in tribal areas which were counter-productive. President Asif Ali Zardari in separate meetings with Army Chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani.... The president said Pakistan's response would be positive if India acted positively on its offer for joint efforts to track down terrorists."

"More Proof Of Mumbai Attacks Sought" "The News" (01/20)

"Reaffirming its firm stance to wipe out the menace of terrorism and extremism, Adviser to the PM on Interior Rehman Malik on Monday underlined that India must give more proofs to Pakistan on the Mumbai attacks. Rehman Malik expressed these views while talking to reporters on Monday after meeting Indian High Commissioner Satyabrata Pal in Islamabad."

"India Keeps Up Pressure On Pakistan Over Mumbai" "Dawn" (01/20)

"India's foreign minister, keeping up pressure on Pakistan to act against militants blamed for the Mumbai attacks, said on Monday that countries failing to clamp down on terrorism would pay a heavy price, Pranab Mukherjee told a conference."

"Obama Takes Over U.S. Presidency Today" "The Nation" (01/20)

"The historic inauguration of Barack Obama, the first black-American President of the U.S., will be celebrated on Tuesday (today) in a number of events featuring the virtual who's who of the entertainment and glamour world. Barack Obama will enter the White House with a crushing burden of expectations both at home and abroad. How he manages those expectations will go a long way to defining his presidency."

"Lashkar Offers To Put Down Arms In Held Kashmir" "Dawn" (01/20)

"In a move clearly timed to coincide with the inauguration of a new American administration, the Lashkar-e-Taiba in Jammu and Kashmir was reported on Monday to have offered to shun its armed campaign for justice if the international community would help peacefully resolve the bloody dispute dogging the Himalayan region for decades."

"U.S. CENTCOM Chief Arrives For 2-Day Visit Today" "Daily Times" (01/20)

"U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Chief General David Petraeus will arrive in Islamabad today (Tuesday), on a two-day visit to help defuse India-Pakistan military tensions and discuss cooperation in the on-going war on terror."

"Drone Attacks No Solution To End Terror: Gilani" "The Nation" (01/20)

"Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has said that the U.S. and NATO countries instead of resorting to drone attacks should strengthen the mechanism of intelligence sharing and assist Pakistan in building the capacity of its defense and law enforcement agencies to help in effectively confronting the extremists and terrorists. The Prime Minister was talking to U.K. Secretary of State for Defence John Hutton, who called on him in Islamabad at the PM House on Monday."

"Pakistan, U.K. For Long-Term Afghan Strategy" "The News" (01/20)

"Pakistan and Britain have agreed that there is an urgent need for long-term strategy on Afghanistan with close cooperation among Afghanistan's neighbors and friends. This understanding came during a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and British Minister for Defence John Hutton at the Foreign Office in Islamabad on Monday.... Hutton expressed satisfaction over the level of

defence cooperation between the two countries and assured the Foreign Minister of the continued support of the U.K. to help Pakistan enhance its capacity in the fight against extremism and terrorism. He agreed with the foreign minister on the need for a long-term strategy on Afghanistan with close cooperation among Afghanistan's neighbors and friends."

"NATO Urges Allies To Follow Obama's Afghan Lead" "Dawn" (01/20)

"NATO members need to follow the U.S. lead in boosting their commitment to the fight against militants in Afghanistan, the alliance's Chief said in Brussels on Monday, the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration as U.S. President. 'The year 2009 will see an infusion of United States forces in this operation,' NATO secretary-general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told a news briefing.

"NATO Chief Due Tomorrow To Discuss Regional Tension" "The Nation" (01/20)

"NATO's Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer will arrive in Islamabad on Wednesday (tomorrow) on a three-day visit to discuss the Indo-Pak stand-off and ongoing war on terror with top Pakistani leadership."

"Foreign Office Stops U.S. Consul General Karachi From Performing Duties?" "Nawa-i-Waqt" (01/20)

"Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has stopped the U.S. Consul General in Karachi Stephen Fakan from discharging his duties on indulging in activities contrary to diplomatic norms. According to sources in MFA, the U.S. Government has sent the Consul General Stephen Fakan without any confirmation from the Government of Pakistan. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stopped him from discharging his duties by terming this act as violation of the diplomatic protocol. Consequently, Mr. Stephen Fakan is confined to (the U.S.) Consulate in Karachi. He isn't permitted to engage in diplomatic activities. He sought to meet the Deputy Chief of Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Karachi two or three times, but the Pakistani officials refused to meet him.

"U.S. Newspaper Publishes Anti-Muslim Cartoon To Hurt Feelings Of Muslims" "Nawa-i-Waqt" (01/20)

"American media once again has started propaganda against Muslims. The New York Post has published cartoon which shows birds trying to make suicide attack on plane while uttering 'Allah Akbar' (God is Great). The cartoonist has tried to say that these birds belong to Al-Qaeda. It may be mentioned here that The New York Post is notorious for publishing anti-Muslim propaganda; Pakistani community has boycotted this newspaper in protest."

"PM Seeks Political Solution To Swat Militancy" "The Nation" (01/20)

"Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on Monday assured the National Assembly that the government was seeking a political solution to the militancy in Swat."

"Five More Schools Blown Up In Swat" "The News" (01/20)

"Suspected militants blew up five schools, including two girls, in Mingora city overnight while the deputy chief of Swat militants threatened the editor and staff of a local newspaper with action for publishing a story against them. Also, a convoy of security forces was attacked with improvised explosive device (IED) in Shin area, but no casualty was reported in the incident."

"Militant Attack Briefly Affects NATO Supplies" "Dawn" (01/20)

"Militants attacked an army camp on late Sunday night, killing one soldier and injuring dozens others and causing closure of the Peshawar-Torkham highway, a NATO supply route, for some time."

"FC Man Killed In Militants Rocket Attacks" "The Nation" (01/20)

"Militants fired rockets on the cantonment area in Landi Kotal in the wee hours of Monday morning, killing a Frontier Constabulary (FC) soldier and injuring 14 others, officials said."

"Terror, Violence Claimed 7,997 Lives In 2008: PIPS" "The News" (01/20)

"At least 7,997 people were killed and 9,670 others sustained injuries in various terrorist attacks, clashes between the security forces and militants, military operations, incidents of political violence, inter-tribe sectarian clashes and border clashes during 2008. These figures were released by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) on the basis of its annual report on Pakistan."

"5,000 Houses In Gaza Reduced To Rubble" "Dawn" (01/20)

"More Israeli forces left the Gaza Strip on Monday and both sides kept a ceasefire, allowing dazed Palestinians to survey the destruction and mourn their dead.... A Hamas official said 5,000 homes, 16 government buildings and 20 mosques were destroyed and 20,000 houses damaged."

Editorials/Op-eds

"A New President," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (01/20)

"Inauguration Day in the U.S. will be unlike any other. Barack Obama's qualifications to become the 44th President of the United States are stellar. Yet, it is the fact that a black man, who at the time of his birth was a distinctly second-class American, will ascend the most powerful office in the world that will make today's events such compelling viewing. There are many problems with the U.S. and its role in the world - as the 43rd President so graphically demonstrated in the past eight years - but the election of Barack Obama is proof that democracy feeds on the promise of a better tomorrow. Together with the rest of the world, we hope President Obama will be able to deliver on that promise."

"Historic Inauguration," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (01/20)

"The election of Mr. Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States has inspired hopes and given birth to expectation not only in his own country, but also all over the world and for good reasons.... The world at large wants measures to cope with global warming and help make the world a more peaceful place by cutting down defence spending on unrealistic military schemes.... Europe hopes the new President would take it on board on major world issues, instead of acting unilaterally and expecting others to follow Washington obediently. Justice-loving nations in general, and the Muslim world in particular, want him to rein in Israel, take time out of the undoubtedly pressing issue of the economy, and expedite the agenda of creating a Palestinian state. They also expect him to reconsider the U.S. policy on terrorism, which is centered round the use of maximum force, and has led to the killing of thousands of innocent people in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas without bringing down the level of militancy. In South Asia the unresolved issue of Kashmir awaits his attention.... In case he fails, he would miss a historic opportunity to improve the U.S. image abroad."

"World's Expectations From U.S. President Barack Obama," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (01/20)

"More than 2 million Americans will gather in Washington today to welcome their new President into the White House. They will undoubtedly bring many hopes and expectations with them. The world also expects that President Obama will review President Bush's war-mongering policies and will help bring peace to the world. There are countless expectations from Mr. Obama, let us see how many are fulfilled."

"Hail To The Chief," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (01/20)

"When he (Mr. Obama) hears for the first time the anthem 'Hail to the Chief' - and he is the Chief being hailed - he will be in sight of the Lincoln memorial and will probably have the words of the

Gettysburg Address ringing in his head. The last words of that, uttered by Lincoln after a bloody battle, are 'that this nation, under God, shall give a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.' Would that those words were a mantra for our own governance. We wish you goodwill and Godspeed Mr. Obama, you have a hard furrow to plough."

"Obama's Oath-Taking" an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (01/20)

"It would be premature to say what the Obama administration's policy towards Pakistan will be, but in view of his statements, it can be said that the new administration will certainly focus on the Kashmir issue.... President Zardari is also arriving in the U.S. today to attend Obama's oath taking. During his meeting with President Obama, he should inform him about Pakistan's interests, including the Kashmir issue. President Zardari should also ask him to review the U.S. policy on alleged terrorism so that the fire lit by the Bush administration in this region can be put out."

"America's Worst President?," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (01/20)

"President George Bush is gone today and not many people will mourn him. Leave the world aside; most Americans will be relieved that he is no longer around.... People around the world have nothing good to say about him. His supporters at home have dwindled and may have vanished after the economic crisis that has bankrupted the world's largest economy. The economy will ultimately recover but not before the world has taken a few knocks from the failure of capitalism as presided over by the United States. The next President, Mr. Barack Obama, will roll back much of what Mr. Bush has wrought, but he may not be able to remove all the scars remaining from the Bush years."

"A Legacy Of Disaster," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (01/18)

"George Bush was the President of the United States at a time when that country embarked on a global offensive against an amorphous enemy called terrorism. It was none other than George Bush who authorized the killing of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians in a war based on lies. It was George Bush who justified torture at Abu Gharib and Guantanamo Bay. It was George Bush who felt it was kosher to bomb an ally such as Pakistan.... America will see the formal authorization of a revolution on Tuesday, when a black man will become president of the United States of America. Yet, despite all the idealism and multi-culturism at his disposal, Barack Obama will not change the world.... There is no indication yet that Barack Obama will reshape America's distorted view of the world."

"Final Farewell," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (01/18)

"Warding off political oblivion for a few more minutes, President George Bush delivered on Thursday night his last speech from the White House.... He emphasized that there had been no terrorist attack on U.S. soil for seven years and that the country was now a safer place than before. Sadly, this is not true for the rest of the world. Since 2002, there have been an increased number of terrorist attacks in many countries. Pakistan is just one example of these. While Bush claimed that the Taliban had been vanquished in Afghanistan, the fact is that even six years after they were defeated by U.S.-led forces in that country, they remain poised to make a comeback. Stability has not been found in Afghanistan and the U.S.-propped puppet regime in Kabul enjoys almost no popular support. Iraq too remains in turmoil and a bloody war in the Middle East threatens to fuel still greater Muslim radicalism. For most people, the world is less safe than it was in 2000, the year Bush took oath as President."

"The Bush Legacy," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (01/17)

"President Bush, in his farewell speech, while defending the U.S. military action in Iraq and Afghanistan, harped on the same theme of

the world being a safer place than it was before 9/11.... The American military adventure around the world forms a glaring example of state terrorism that, among other things, has weakened democracy contrary to the claims made by the U.S. President. As things stand, the American image in the Muslim world has been badly tarnished and the anti-American sentiment threatens a wider conflagration. The pity is that the Bush Administration did not spare Pakistan and resorted to the strategy of making drone attacks inside the tribal areas, something that has greatly destabilized the country. The ongoing war in Gaza, when seen in the broader context, is yet another example of the U.S. trying to achieve its strategic objectives."

"Beginning Of Rule Of Slaves In The U.S.?" an op-ed by Mehmood Sham, the Group Editor of the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (01/20)

"The economic meltdown of the United States will be a big challenge for the new U.S. President Barack Obama. The improvement of the U.S. economy will be on top priority of the Obama Administration. The U.S. history shows that it always resorted to go for wars to revitalize its volatile economy, as its arms factories and other industries work much faster owing to growing consumption of the commodities during conflicts. Let us see, whether or not Mr. Obama will be able to change this approach and evolve a new strategy."

"Stop Forces Of Darkness And Ignorance," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (01/20)

"A large number of schools, colleges, hospitals, barber shops, and other trade centers have been destroyed in different parts of the NWFP in the name of Taliban. The perpetrators opined that all those institutions and centers were running contrary to the teaching of Islam. These acts of Taliban are a premeditated conspiracy to drive the country into the dark age of ignorance. This malign drive is not only earning a bad name for Pakistan, but this situation is also very encouraging for those who are targeting Islam and Muslims across the world. The government must formulate a plan of action to deal with this serious situation. And all political parties, NGOs and religious scholars must support the government in this arrangement."

"Account Of Dr. Aafiya In Her Own Words," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (01/20)

"All those who raise the human rights issues, or deliver long lectures on dignity of human beings raised a terrible hue and cry when the Taliban administration were implementing Shariat sentences in Afghanistan. They also highlighted the issue of Mukhtaran Mai, a gang-rape victim, and they always review the human rights situation in Pakistan minutely, but they are silent over human rights violations in the United States."

"Afghan Government And NATO's Allegations Against Each Other," an editorial note in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (01/20)

"According to a news report, the NATO Secretary General has strongly criticized the Afghan government's performance and termed it a bigger problem than the Taliban. He also termed the Afghan government corrupt and inefficient. The Afghan government responded by saying that the Allied forces are equally responsible for Afghanistan's worsening situation.... The new U.S. administration must ponder over these issues and take effective measures to improve the situation. One suggestion would be to remove the differences between the Afghan government and NATO, and to subsequently intensify the campaign against terrorism. Once the situation improves, foreign troops must be withdrawn immediately."

"Differences Between NATO And Afghan Administration," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (01/20)

"With the departure of U.S. President Bush, the cracks in the unnatural coalition of the Afghan Administration and NATO have also become quite visible. Both are blaming each other for failure in Afghanistan. NATO Secretary General while criticizing the Afghan government has termed it a bigger problem than even the Taliban

menace. In fact the NATO forces are responsible of all mess in Afghanistan, as they spoiled the peaceful environment of Afghanistan, and promised to devise a new system of government there. But instead of building any infrastructure, the NATO forces focused on pursuing the Northern Alliance to fight against Taliban, and the Afghan administration played role of mercenary. And no one pay heed to the administration."

Patterson